

Community resources

[Follow us on Twitter](#) [Check our Reddit](#) [Twitter this](#) [Digg this page](#) [Contact us on IRC](#)

courage is contagious

Viewing cable 08GENEVA498, NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL PRESIDENT MARTIN UHOMOIBHI \

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the [structure of a cable](#) as well as how to [discuss them](#) with others. See also the [FAQs](#)

Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#08GENEVA498**.

| Reference ID | Created | Released | Classification | Origin |
|--------------|------------------|------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| 08GENEVA498 | 2008-07-01 12:57 | 2011-08-30 01:44 | CONFIDENTIAL//NOFORN | US Mission Geneva |

Appears in these articles:

http://www.letemps.ch/swiss_papers

VZCZCXYZ0006
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHGV #0498/01 1831257
ZNY CCCCC ZZH (CCY ADXAE2BA9 MSI5578 400A)
R 011257Z JUL 08 ZDS
FM USMISSION GENEVA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6662
INFO RUEHZJ/HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2774

2008-07-01 12:57:00 08GENEVA498 US Mission Geneva CONFIDENTIAL//NOFORN VZCZCXYZ0006\
RR RUEHWEB\
\

DE RUEHGV #0498/01 1831257\
ZNY CCCCC ZZH (CCY ADXAE2BA9 MSI5578 400A)\
R 011257Z JUL 08 ZDS\
FM USMISSION GENEVA\
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6662\
INFO RUEHZJ/HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL COLLECTIVE\
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2774\
C O N F I D E N T I A L GENEVA 000498 \
\

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - NOFORN CAPTION ADDED \
\

SIPDIS \
\

NOFORN \

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/26/2018 \

TAGS: [UNHRC](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL PRESIDENT MARTIN UHOMOIBHI \

Classified By: Ambassador Warren W. Tichenor, Reasons 1.4(b)(d) \

¶1. (C) Summary: Nigerian Permanent Representative to the \
UN in Geneva, Martin Uhomoibhi, was formally elected \
President of the UN Human Rights Council June 18. His \
nomination by the African Group to serve as the Council's \
President for the 2008-2009 session had been contested from \
within the Group by Djibouti, which had the strong backing of \
Egypt, which wanted a Muslim PermRep from a majority Muslim \
country to hold the presidency. Uhomoibhi, a practicing \
Roman Catholic who is close to the Holy See's mission in \
Geneva, beat out his Djiboutian counterpart in an 18-15 vote \
within the African Group. Uhomoibhi, who took up his post in \
Geneva on March 15, 2007, has attended Council sessions \
infrequently; we are not aware of any previous experience he \
may have handling human rights issues. Mission Geneva has \
dealt closely with him at both the World Intellectual \
Property Organization (WIPO) and on International \
Organization on Migration (IOM) issues and found him \
approachable, articulate, and principled. He is reportedly \
strongly influenced by his faith, and has proven himself \
willing to stand up to pressure from Organization of the \
Islamic Conference (OIC) countries under many circumstances. \
Uhomoibhi's relative independence from African Group \
"group-think" could be very useful to Western Group views at \
the Council. Based on our past dealings with him, Uhomoibhi \
has been willing to broker compromises with the U.S. and \
other WHRG countries if we are active and engaged, although \
he would not necessarily favor Western views otherwise. \
Uhomoibhi has informed Ambassador Tichenor that he wants to \
work closely with the U.S. and that he wants to lead the \
Council to become a body "that is worthy of U.S. engagement." \
End Summary. \

Standing Up to the OIC \

¶2. (C/NF) Ambassador Uhomoibhi has little track record at \
the Human Rights Council, but both there and in other \
Geneva-based fora has demonstrated some independence from the \
views of the OIC. His predecessor as Nigeria's PermRep in \
Geneva had been Muslim and had been much more closely aligned \
to the OIC. Uhomoibhi's close election by the African Group \
as Council President highlights a fault line in the group \
along religious lines which bears close monitoring in the \
Council on important issues such as defamation of religions \
and freedom of expression. Uhomoibhi told Ambassador \
Tichenor that Egyptian PermRep (and future Egyptian \
Ambassador to the U.S.) Sameh Shoukry had pressured him to \
"protect" Sudan at the Council from those who would criticize \
its human rights record. In another context, when serving as \
President of the WIPO General Assembly, Uhomoibhi told \
Ambassador Tichenor that he had received visits from both the \
Egyptian and Algerian PermReps, claiming that he was "not a \
good African" for cooperating with those who were attempting \
to force WIPO Director General Kamil Idris from office. \
Unlike some of his African Group counterparts, Uhomoibhi \
appears to pursue no pre-cooked agenda within Geneva fora, \
instead relying on where his principles guide him. This \
willingness to consider various issues on their merits has \
made and continues to make him potentially a sympathetic ally \
to the U.S under certain circumstances. \

Uhomoibhi's Record as WIPO General Assembly President \

¶3. (C/NF) Mission Geneva views of Ambassador Uhomoibhi are \
strongly influenced by our experience working with him since \
September 2007 in his role as WIPO GA President. At WIPO, \
the U.S. and other close allies were working to help force \
the resignation of WIPO DG Idris, a Sudanese national who had \
falsified his UN personnel records for personal gain. \

Uhomoibhi made the principled decision to support Idris's \ removal, and was supported by Zambia, Ghana and Rwanda, a \ similar split within the African Group to that we have seen \ at the Human Rights Council. Because he believed that Idris \ should resign, Uhomoibhi was accused by some of his African \ Group colleagues of being a tool of Western interests at \ WIPO. He stood up under the pressure, apparently deciding \ that Idris, by lying on his UN personnel records, had \ undermined the overall integrity and dignity of all Africans. \ Uhomoibhi worked closely with us on the text of Idris's \ retirement letter, not accepting Mission Geneva's proposed \ draft verbatim, but using it as the basis for constructive \ negotiations in which he served as intermediary between the \ U.S. and Idris. Once the WIPO GA accepted Idris's \ resignation, Uhomoibhi ran the election process for his \ replacement with scrupulous fairness, resulting in the \ election of a qualified candidate with high integrity. \

14. (C/NF) That is not to say, however, that left to his own \ devices, Uhomoibhi will always act in U.S. interests. As the \ long process of inducing WIPO DG Idris to resign ran its \ course, Uhomoibhi accepted the U.S. proposal to create a \ "friends of the chair" group to bridge disagreements over how \ to act on an internal audit report documenting misconduct on \ the part of Idris. Once the "friends" group was created, \ however, Uhomoibhi initially acquiesced to an attempt to \ stack the deck against the good governance side by allowing \ representatives from groups such as the OIC, G-77 and other \ blocs on the "friends" group -- players sympathetic to \ Idris's efforts to remain in his job. However, when the U.S. \ countered by arguing that, in that case, other blocs \ irrelevant to the issue like JUSCANZ, the EU, etc. should \ also be represented among "friends of the chair," Uhomoibhi \ changed his position, deciding that only the coordinators of \ WIPO's seven regional groups would serve as "friends." \

Nigeria's Role in IOM/Swing Election Campaign \

15. (C/NF) Nigeria, as well as most other African Group \ members, supported U.S. candidate Bill Swing in June 18 \ elections for Director General of the IOM. Uhomoibhi took \ the initiative to host a lunch for select African Group \ ambassadors with all four IOM DG candidates. Uhomoibhi told \ us he was hosting the lunch and promoting a separate meeting \ for Swing with the entire Africa Group to help bolster \ Swing's chances. In fact, we did not favor the lunch and it \ was soon clear that Uhomoibhi was acting also to demonstrate \ his own leadership among the Africans. While he did campaign \ among Africans for Swing -- who ultimately won -- the lesson \ we draw is that while Uhomoibhi can be likeminded in pursuit \ of shared enterprise, he remains independent and devoted to \ advancing his own agenda. \

Biographical Information \

16. (C) Martin Ihoeghian Uhomoibhi is married to Dr. \ Perpetua E. Uhomoibhi and has two children, a college-age \ daughter studying in Nigeria and a pre-teenage son who lives \ with the family in Geneva. Uhomoibhi reportedly speaks \ little French, a factor that we understand undermined support \ for him among Francophone African Group members. Colleagues \ at the Mission of the Holy See in Geneva confirm that \ Uhomoibhi is a practicing Roman Catholic who is close to \ their Mission. Through repeated conversations with \ Uhomoibhi, Ambassador Tichenor has learned that Uhomoibhi's \ faith is central to his work, and Ambassador Tichenor \ considers Uhomoibhi's faith the basis of his willingness to \ take principled positions. A UNOG press release dated 19 \ June 2008 on Ambassador Uhomoibhi's appointment as Council \ President follows: \

17. (U) Martin Ihoeghian Uhomoibhi is currently serving as \ Ambassador of Nigeria to Switzerland and Permanent \ Representative to the United Nations Office at Geneva. Dr. \ Uhomoibhi begins his one-year term as President of the Human \

Rights Council today. Prior to his appointment to Geneva, \ Dr. Uhomoibhi served as the acting Director of the Office of \ the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of \ Nigeria from 2004 to 2007. From July 2003 to January 2004, \ he was Deputy Director and Head of Division for Inter-African \ Affairs at the Ministry. In 2000, Dr. Uhomoibhi was \ appointed Minister and Deputy Head of Mission to the Nigerian \ Embassy in Addis Ababa, where he concurrently served as his \ country's representative to the African Union and to the \ Economic Commission for Africa until 2003. In 1999 he was \ appointed Consul General of Nigeria in Atlanta, with \ responsibility for United States-Nigeria relations in the 16 \ states of the south-eastern United States. Dr. Uhomoibhi has \ also been serving as the President of the General Assembly of \ the World Intellectual Property Organization since September \ 2007. \

\ From 1995 to 1999, Dr. Uhomoibhi served as Special Assistant \ to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Prior to that, from \ 1993 to 1995, he served as the coordinator and alternative \ representative of Nigeria to the Security Council in New \ York. Dr. Uhomoibhi started his diplomatic career in 1984, \ when he joined the Minister of Foreign Affairs as a Senior \ First Secretary. In his previous career, from 1977 to 1984, \ he was a lecturer in diplomatic and African history at the \ University of Ibadan in Nigeria. \

\ Dr. Uhomoibhi graduated from the University of Ibadan in 1976 \ with a bachelor's degree in history. He also holds a \ master's in history and political science from the University \ of Ibadan and a D.Phil from Oxford University in Modern \ History and International Relations. \

\ Born on 3 November 1954 in Nigeria, Dr. Uhomoibhi is married \ with children. \

TICHENOR \